

CITY OF MUSKEGON  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES

**September 10, 2020**

This meeting was held electronically via Zoom. Chairperson T. Michalski called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. and roll was taken.

MEMBERS PRESENT: J. Montgomery-Keast, L. Spataro, B. Larson, S. Gawron, B. Mazade,  
J. Doyle, E. Hood, T. Michalski

MEMBERS ABSENT: F. Peterson

STAFF PRESENT: M. Franzak, D. Renkenberger

OTHERS PRESENT: None

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion to approve the Minutes of the special Planning Commission meeting of August 20, 2020 was made by J. Montgomery-Keast, supported by L. Spataro and unanimously approved.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Hearing, Case 2020-15: Staff-initiated request to rezone all single-family (R-1, R-2, R-3) and duplex (RT) parcels in the McLaughlin, Angell and Jackson Hill neighborhoods to Form Based Code, Urban Residential (FBC-UR). M. Franzak stated that city staff had been working with various neighborhoods to identify problem areas and reduce the number of large multiplexes. Although multiplexes were important for affordability, the size needed to be limited so they fit in with the neighborhood. It was discovered that the zoning in the McLaughlin, Angell and Jackson Hill neighborhoods didn't match the reality of existing homes in those areas, which were single-family, duplex and small multiplex (3- to 4-unit) homes. Current zoning allowed only single-family homes, making all other home types non-conforming according to the zoning ordinance. Non-conforming properties were susceptible to disinvestment due to issues with financing, obtaining insurance, and rebuilding, which tended to create a lot of unusable space. He stated that the proper zoning designation would promote reinvestment within the neighborhoods, and staff was proposing to rezone the 3 neighborhoods to allow the types of homes that already existed there, but were considered non-conforming. New duplexes/small multiplexes could then be built on appropriate lots which would reduce many of the problems associated with existing multi-family homes. Staff also proposed that small-multiplexes be allowed only where alleys were present, as alleys reduced privacy/noise issues associated with multi-family homes. Staff provided rental maps of the neighborhoods, showing that they were already made up of various missing-middle housing types. Photos of properly- and improperly-zoned housing were also provided, illustrating the aesthetic difference that proper zoning could make.

J. Montgomery-Keast asked if the proposal would cause the current non-conforming homes to become conforming. M. Franzak stated that it would if they met all the requirements, and it would help homeowners in obtaining insurance on their properties.

There were no public comments. A motion to close the public hearing was made by B. Larson,

supported by J. Doyle and unanimously approved.

A motion that the request to rezone all single-family (R-1, R-2, R-3) and duplex (RT) parcels in the McLaughlin, Angell and Jackson Hill neighborhoods to Form Based Code, Urban Residential (FBC-UR) be recommended to the City Commission for approval was made by L. Spataro and supported by B. Larson, with discussion continuing on the motion.

B. Mazade stated that he was not opposed to Form Based Code zoning, but he was concerned about how this rezoning would affect existing single-family homes. L. Spataro stated that the Nelson Neighborhood had been a kind of test case for Form Based Code zoning, and he was very comfortable with it. There had been a number of town hall meetings with the residents, which had identified issues including lender financing of homes considered “non-conforming”. He stated that the proposed FBC-Urban Residential zoning addressed many types of past issues.

A vote was taken on the motion to approve the request, which passed with J. Montgomery-Keast, L. Spataro, B. Larson, S. Gawron, J. Doyle, E. Hood, and T. Michalski voting aye, and B. Mazade voting nay.

Hearing, Case 2020-16: Staff-initiated request to amend the FBC, UR section of the zoning ordinance to restrict three- and four-unit homes to parcels that have an alley or other recorded rear access easement for vehicles. M. Franzak stated that this case was related to the previous case, and sought to amend the FBC-UR ordinance to allow multi-unit homes by right, with a 4-unit-maximum, only when useable alley or a rear-access easement was present.

L. Spataro asked about large parcels without a rear alley that would otherwise allow multiplex development, and if a developer would be able to add an alley. M. Franzak stated that a developer could request to add an alley, or other creative solutions such as installation of a long driveway extending to the rear of a property.

There were no public comments. A motion to close the public hearing was made by B. Larson, supported by J. Montgomery-Keast and unanimously approved.

A motion that the request to amend the FBC, UR section of the zoning ordinance to restrict three- and four-unit homes to parcels that have an alley or other recorded rear access easement for vehicles, be recommended to the City Commission for approval, was made by J. Montgomery-Keast, supported by L. Spataro and approved, with J. Montgomery-Keast, L. Spataro, B. Larson, S. Gawron, J. Doyle, E. Hood, and T. Michalski voting aye, and B. Mazade voting nay.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

None

## **OLD BUSINESS**

New development on Western Ave near 8<sup>th</sup> St. – L. Spataro stated that he liked what was being done with the redeveloped lot on Western Ave and 8<sup>th</sup> St, but that the outdoor patio was not handicap-accessible. He stated that it was important in the design phase of these projects to ensure that all new development was accessible and welcoming to all. M. Franzak stated that he would discuss this with the developer.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:45 PM.

DR